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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [MR](#)  
SUBJECT: MAURITANIAN AUTHORITIES IDENTIFY A SUSPECT IN  
CONNECTION WITH THE ISRAELI EMBASSY ATTACK

Classified By: Ambassador Mark M. Boulware for reasons 1.4 (B and d)

11. (SBU) On February 25 the Public Prosecutor officially accused one Al Khadim Ould Semane of participating in the February 1 attack on the Israeli embassy. Semane is a known activist for Al Qaeda who escaped from Nouakchott central prison in 2005 and fled the country immediately afterward. The two participants in the December 24 attack on French tourists near Aleg, Mauritania -- currently in police custody in Nouakchott -- confirmed to police that Ould Semane had visited Mauritania several times after his escape from prison to plan attacks in the country. The Public Prosecutor accused Ould Semane of participating in a terrorist organization, carrying illegal firearms and explosives, participating in offenses against national security, and the use of national territory for launching terrorist attacks against another country. All of the charges were brought against Ould Semane under article 846 of the Mauritanian anti-terrorist law.

12. (SBU) Mauritanian authorities have made a number of arrests during the course of their investigation into the Israeli Embassy attack. Nine known Salafists were arrested in mid-February on suspicion that they either supported the attackers, or directly participated in the attack. The attorney general ruled later that there was not enough evidence to specifically link seven of the nine suspects to the attack, and they were subsequently released. The judge in charge of investigating the case disagreed and ordered the seven men to be rearrested twenty-four hours later. The accused have now been transferred to the custody of the National Guard while a thorough investigation is conducted. Separately, the other two Salafists were due to be transferred to National Guard custody in late February 2008 for their possible role in the attack on the Embassy.

13. (S) Comment: The Mauritanian Government is seriously pursuing the investigation into the February 1 attack against the Israeli Embassy. In our exchanges with the Mauritanian security services, it was understood that the immediate post-attack arrests were of "the usual suspects" to determine if they had any information concerning the attack. There was little expectation that all had been involved in the attack and our assessment is that the prosecutor's decision to release seven of the nine at the end of the two week questioning period allowed by law was justified. The cases of the remaining three suspects are likely directly related to the attack. The court's decision to overturn the prosecutor's decision to release seven of the nine suspects is an interesting turnaround from the court's decision in 2007 to dismiss terrorism cases -- indicative of a greater awareness in the judiciary of the terrorist threat and a desire not to be seen as "soft on terrorism" as actual attacks have shaken national confidence in the judiciary. End Comment.  
Boulware